

DEUSOP01 – Handling Digital Evidence

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1. Scope

- 1.1. This standard operating procedure is utilized for the handling of digital evidence that is being received for examination by the Digital Evidence Unit.

2. Background

- 2.1. To establish the practices for documenting the examination of evidence to conform to the requirements of the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Digital Evidence Unit *Quality Assurance Manual*, the accreditation standards under ISO/IEC 17025:2017, and any supplemental standards.

3. Safety

- 3.1. If necessary due to condition of evidence received (e.g. hazardous and/or biological substances), wear appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., lab coat, gloves, mask, eye protection) when carrying out standard operating procedures.
- 3.2. Electrical shocks can occur if the evidence item is opened or dismantled. Ensure that sources of power are disconnected prior to opening or dismantling evidence items if not necessary for procedure or not noted in procedure.
- 3.3. When accessing, opening or deconstructing a computer, consideration should be given to wearing a mask or goggles to protect against dust and other particles that may be present during the deconstruction.

4. Materials Required

- 4.1. PPE (gloves, coats, glasses, goggles, masks); camera; ruler/measuring equipment; evidence tape; scissors/scalpel; marker; access to LIMS; background paper for photography.

5. Standards and Controls

- 5.1. Not applicable.

6. Calibration

- 6.1. Not applicable.

7. Procedures

- 7.1. When receiving an evidence item that is packaged, document packaging and any seals/markings. Once opened, document the condition of the evidence item received. Documentation can be via photographs of evidence and/or appropriate DEU forms. When photographing evidence, please ensure the case number/identifier is in at least one photograph in the series of evidence photographs.
- 7.1.1. When receiving an evidence item directly from the requesting agent, evidence may not be sealed or packaged. Document the state of the evidence and packaging.
- 7.1.2. Evidence that is not clearly identifiable in packaging (e.g., a cellphone in a plastic bag) should be opened cautiously. Items may be in multiple packages. Document items accordingly.
- 7.1.3. Evidence may be received from a victim/complainant and an acquisition/examination may need to be done while still in the presence of the victim/complainant. The device does not need to be added as an evidence item in LIMS.
- 7.2. Upon receipt of the evidence item, the item must be transferred in LIMS to a DEU analyst as soon as practical and ensure that the Chain of Custody is captured appropriately.
- 7.2.1. For items that are received directly from the requesting agent, the item must be entered into LIMS to ensure the Chain of Custody is captured appropriately.

- 7.2.2. Vehicles do not require transfer to a DEU analyst for examination, but any removed modules should be entered into LIMS and transferred to a DEU analyst.
- 7.3. Follow the appropriate SOP for device examination, storage, and reporting.
- 7.4. After completing the examination, evidence items will be placed back in packaging, if possible, and sealed with the date and DEU analyst's initials.
 - 7.4.1. If evidence is not received in packaging, the requesting agent will be contacted to determine evidence disposition (i.e., back to requesting agent, DEU evidence storage).
- 7.5. All evidence items will be packaged and sealed appropriately for their intended disposition.
 - 7.5.1. All evidence items returned to CEU or ECB will be appropriately packaged and sealed.
 - 7.5.2. All evidence items kept in DEU evidence storage will be packaged and sealed. Evidence items awaiting further examination may be left unsealed.
 - 7.5.3. All evidence items returned to requesting agent or representative will be packaged and sealed according to requesting agent's preference. Evidence items in DEU evidence storage awaiting return to requesting agent or representative may be packaged and sealed according to requesting agent's preference.
- 7.6. Evidence item disposition will be documented on DEU reports/forms. Evidence items will also be transferred to appropriate disposition locations/representative in LIMS.

8. Sampling

- 8.1. Not applicable.

9. Calculations

- 9.1. Not applicable.

10. Uncertainty of Measurement

- 10.1. Not applicable.

11. Limitations

11.1. Not applicable.

12. Documentation

12.1. Chain of Custody (LIMS)

12.2. Photographs

12.3. Applicable DEU Forms

12.4. Applicable DEU SOPs

13. References

13.1. Digital Evidence Unit Quality Assurance Manual (Current Version).

13.2. DFS Departmental Operations Manuals (Current Versions).

13.3. Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) Laboratory Operations Manuals (Current Versions).

13.4. Digital Evidence Unit Laboratory Operations Manuals (Current Versions).

13.5. SWDGE Best Practices for Computer Forensics (Version 3.1, 05 Sep 2014).